

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, October 6, 2010
2:00 – 4:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Thomas Brothen (chair), Cody Mikl, Alon McCormick, Peh Ng, Jane Phillips, Peggy Root, Henning Schroeder, Paul Siliciano, Donna Spannaus-Martin, Elaine Tarone, Cathrine Wambach

Absent: Barbara Brandt, Norman Chervany, Robert McMaster, Kristen Nelson, Michael Wade

Guests: Vicki Field (Office of the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education); Tina Falkner (Academic Support Resources); Professor Nita Krevans (chair, Graduate School Policy Review Committee)

[In these minutes: (1) definition of 5xxx courses; (2) expected academic work per credit for graduate students; (3) draft policy on eligibility for Ph.D. examining committees]

1. Definition of 5xxx Courses

Professor Brothen convened the meeting at 2:00 and turned to Vice Provost Schroeder to raise a question about the definition of 5xxx courses. [The definition in the policy Course Numbering: Twin Cities, Crookston, Morris, Rochester reads as follows: "5xxx - Courses primarily for graduate students; undergraduate students in their third or fourth year may enroll in such courses."]

This is an issue that Professor Krevans's policy-review committee can look at if it is an issue, Ms. Field noted. Vice Provost Schroeder said that some graduate students are not happy with the level of instruction in some 5xxx courses because of the large number of undergraduates in the course.

Professor Wambach recalled that there was discussion in previous years that there was a sense departments developed 5xxx courses for graduate students because they did not have to go through the Graduate School for approval—and a sense that departments should not get away with this. With the new structure, that should not be a big issue, Dr. Schroeder said, because graduate courses no longer need to go through the Policy and Review Councils.

Professor Siliciano said his college has the opposite problem. They offer special topics courses for graduate and advanced undergraduate students at the 5xxx level; they understand that the Graduate School allows graduate credit for 5xxx courses at the discretion of the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), but they have DGSs who will not allow credit for them because they believe the courses should carry an 8xxx number. That should not be decided by the DGS, Dr. Schroeder commented. That is unusual, Ms. Field agreed; programs sometimes say graduate students must take a course at the 8xxx level, but the Graduate School allows credit for 5xxx courses. Dr. Schroeder said that units can make the rules.

* These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

Professor Tarone said that in some cases, departments may not be able to offer a course if it is not taught at the 5xxx level because there are too few graduate students to justify offering it, but there are a sufficient number of students if advanced undergraduates are also allowed to enroll in it. (For example, the college rule may require a minimum of five students to enroll in a 5xxx course for it to be offered; if there are only three graduate students who need to take it, the department could not continue to offer the course unless it allows advanced undergraduate also to enroll in it.) These are courses that graduate programs need to survive. Vice Provost Schroeder suggested that if there are not enough graduate students to enroll in a course, and it needs undergraduates to survive, perhaps the department should think about whether it needs the course or if it can be merged with another one. It is a required course, Professor Tarone explained. That is a decision of the graduate program, Dr. Schroeder observed. It is required as part of the content of the degree, Professor Tarone responded, and the problem is not limited to one department. Dr. Schroeder said the regulations are set at the local level; it may be that units will have to adapt their coursework to the "new normal" and perhaps reorganize their courses. It is content students need to know, Professor Tarone said; there are other ways to deliver content than through a course, Dr. Schroeder said. Tutorials with fewer than five graduate students could be one way. Professor Tarone said that there are decisions being made that make it difficult to fill graduate programs. A 5xxx course with undergraduates can enroll 10 students and be at a high level. If all graduate courses must be offered at the 8xxx level, that is a problem for departments.

The issue is that the approval process has been difficult, Professor Wambach said, even though 5xxx courses are primarily for graduate students. Professor Tarone has suggested there are good reasons for 5xxx courses to exist, but if they are not vetted through a process that decides whether they are appropriate for graduate students, the Graduate School or the college must decide on a process. Ms. Field said she also knows of programs with too many graduate students and not enough faculty members. The enrollment cap has been difficult for some CLA departments; one thing smaller programs might consider is admitting a larger cohort every other year so there are enough students to fill their courses. This is an important issue, Professor Tarone said, because the solution is said to be smaller graduate programs, but they lack competitiveness. Dr. Schroeder said that it does not sound like this happened by accident and that perhaps there is a plan.

Are the limits on enrollments and class sizes driven by the budget, Professor Brothen asked? If so, budget rules are intersecting rules for structuring courses. Professor Tarone said she did not understand the restrictions; in some cases, graduate students are willing to pay their own way.

Dr. Schroeder said he did not believe that in a Ph.D. program where students need to receive or consume knowledge to do their scholarly work, that knowledge had to be delivered in every case in a structured course. There are a number of ways students can reach the point they need to be at. He said things may be different in a Masters program, where the taught elements are important. Colleges have authority to adapt programs.

The way the policy is written, it is designed to be vague, Professor Wambach said, and it does not define the difference between a 5xxx and 8xxx course, such as the type of paper that might be required. There are a number of statistics courses offered at the 5xxx level so that new graduate students can count them, even though the content may be similar to that in the 1xxx course. It depends on the audience. Course numbers are also geared to an external audience, Dr. Falkner pointed out, so

that employers, for example, can know what level a course was. The reaction of the campus to hindrances to 8xxx courses led departments to create 5xxx course to get on the books, Dr. Schroeder commented, which distorts what is meant on the transcript when the courses should be 8xxx. Dr. Falkner commented that Professor Tarone was also correct, however: It is possible to have more robust learning with advanced undergraduate students and graduate students together, and the reason for offering courses at the 5xxx level was not always to get around administrative hurdles.

Professor McCormick asked if it is permissible to assign different workloads to graduate and undergraduate students in a 5xxx course. It is, Professor Brothen affirmed. Ms. Field noted that most Policy and Review Councils had guidelines for 5xxx versus 8xxx courses, and it may be helpful for Professor Krevans's committee to provide such guidelines. It would also be useful to disseminate the information—and information that the procedures have changed, Professor Wambach added.

2. Expected Academic Work per Credit for Graduate Students

Professor Brothen next turned to Vice Provost Schroeder's query about whether the existing policy on Expected Academic Work per Credit should be revised.

[The pertinent policy provisions are these:

A. Undergraduate Students

1. Student workload expectations per undergraduate credit. The Faculty Senate affirms the standard (first adopted by the Senate on February 16, 1922) that, for fall and spring semester, one credit represents, for the average University undergraduate student, three hours of academic work per week (including lectures, laboratories, recitations, discussion groups, field work, study, and so on), averaged over the semester, in order to complete the work of the course to achieve an average grade. Thus, enrollment for 15 credits in a semester represents approximately 45 hours of work per week, on average, over the course of the semester.

...

B. Graduate School and Professional School Students

It is expected that the academic work required of Graduate School and professional school students will exceed three hours per credit per week.]

Dr. Schroeder had suggested that section B should be eliminated and that the expectations should be the same for both groups.

Vice Provost Schroeder reported that Professor Krevans's committee is looking at the credits required for a degree. Dr. Schroeder said that unless the language is made more concrete, or unless one believes that for graduate education, especially the Ph.D., one does not need such a narrow definition of a credit. Success in a Ph.D. program is not defined by the number of credits a student takes but by new knowledge or fresh work that the student generates. In terms of the Ph.D., he said, the emphasis should be on the student being an early-career scholar and independent thinker, not a late-career students. Students should make the transition to the former not too late in their programs.

Professor Wambach said that Dr. Schroeder has an alternative view of Ph.D. education as more of an apprenticeship experience. This policy is not about course credit, it allows faculty to

require more work from students at the graduate level. It says graduate students can't complain too much about the work they have to do for a credit. Dr. Falkner also noted that there is an exception for undergraduates: If a field has different professional norms, such as an art course requiring more than three hours of work per week per credit, the policy permits additional work to be required. The provision for graduate work parallels the exceptions for undergraduates.

Dr. Schroeder asked if the policy is to be used to justify long programs for Ph.D. students. It is not, Dr. Falkner said; it says that graduate students can't complain about having to do more work than undergraduates. Professor Brothen asked Dr. Schroeder about his view of the utility of section B. It is related to the question of whether Ph.D. students need to take courses. Dr. Schroeder said he would be concerned if it affects the way Ph.D. students are perceived to be early-career researchers.

Professor Root said the view in her school, Veterinary Medicine, is that the students are becoming veterinarians. They value section B of the policy because they have a large number of courses where students must think about where they are going to spend their time, and some two-credit courses could require more work than some four-credit courses. Students are not to think about the time spent per credit.

Professional programs are not concerned about the number of articles that come out of a student's Ph.D. education, Dr. Schroeder commented. If one wants to cut the cost and time to degree for a Ph.D. program it is not a good idea to require a long program for a late-career student, rather than treating Ph.D. students as junior colleagues. There is a balance in her field, Professor Tarone said; learning about the research and doing it; someone coming into the program with a Bachelor's degree in another field will not be ready to do graduate work.

Dr. Schroeder agreed that that is necessary in some fields. At the meeting of about 60 AAU graduate deans, several made the same case: They admit students on the basis of good grades and test scores, not whether people will be good scholars, and they often must offer many courses in order to bring students up to speed in a discipline. One dean argued that courses should be banned the first year in order to see if a student can make a go of it; others argued that Ph.D. programs should admit more students with a Masters degree in the field, which would leave more time for research and teaching. Even if that were to occur, however, there would still be duplication of courses taken elsewhere. They also made the point that the Ph.D. costs half as much in Australia, the UK, and Europe as it does in the U.S.—and U.S. programs are better, but it is not clear they are twice as good as those elsewhere. Moreover, a number of students find out after two years in a Ph.D. program that research is not for them, so they drop out when they reach the point of having to write a dissertation. They do not realize what it means to be on their own and take charge of their education.

As the policy-review committee considers regulations around the Ph.D., Ms. Field said, this is an appropriate policy to look at. The policy is not inaccurate as it stands, Dr. Falkner said: The three-hour expectation is not applicable at the graduate and professional levels and students can expect more work. If the University were to go to a model whereby tuition is not measured by the amount of credits a student must take, then section B is fine, Dr. Schroeder said.

3. Draft Policy on Eligibility for Ph.D. Examining Committees

[Note: educational policies are not adopted until they have been approved by the Faculty Senate and by the President's Policy Committee.]

Professor Brothen now welcomed Professor Nita Krevans, chair of the Graduate School Policy Review Committee, to present a draft policy on appointments to graduate examining committees. The draft policy read as follows (draft policy and questions raised between the * * *):

* * *

Proposed policy on appointments to graduate examining committees

Each college must have a set of publicly available standards and processes for appointments to all roles on graduate examining committees, with special attention to requirements for advisors and for chairs of the Ph.D. final oral examination committee.

The following minimum requirements apply:

a. University of Minnesota faculty members with an earned doctorate in an appropriate field from an accredited institution who hold tenure-track or tenured appointments may serve in any role on master's and doctoral committees. Special requirements apply for service as chair of the Ph.D. final oral examination committee. (See item b)

[Reason for policy; tenure-track appointments at a research university are made with the expectation of service on graduate committees]

b. The chair of the Ph.D. final oral examination committee

(1) may not be the advisor or co-advisor

(2) must hold a tenured appointment at the University of Minnesota and an earned doctorate in an appropriate field from an accredited institution

[Reason for policy: ensures fair, correct proceedings at final oral]

c. Every Ph.D. final oral examination committee must include at least two tenured/tenure-track University of Minnesota faculty members with earned doctorates in appropriate fields from an accredited institution, at least one of whom must hold full tenure. There are no exceptions to this requirement.

[Reason for policy: ensures a substantial role for University of Minnesota faculty when awarding the university's own doctorate]

d. Other University of Minnesota faculty and staff (including adjunct faculty) with an earned doctorate in an appropriate field from an accredited institution may serve on master's and doctoral committees and act as advisors, subject to a review process and criteria specified by the collegiate unit.

[Reason for policy: allows flexibility in membership of committees; ensures appropriate standards for graduate education]

e. Emeritus faculty and faculty who have left the University of Minnesota may continue with active committee assignments, including advisor, but may not serve as chair of the Ph.D. final oral examination committee.

[Reason for policy: promote timely completion of degrees; recognize need for continuity in advising]

f. Outside experts (with or without faculty appointments elsewhere) may serve on examining committees in any role except as ~~sole~~ advisor or chair of the Ph.D. final oral examination committee, subject to approval by the collegiate unit.

[Reason for policy: allow flexibility in committee membership; make appropriate use of specialists who do not hold University of Minnesota appointments when a student can benefit from their oversight]

g. No one may serve in any role on a graduate examining committee if they have a nonacademic relationship to the candidate, as it presents an appearance of creating a conflict of interest.

h. No person working toward a graduate degree at the University of Minnesota may serve on a graduate examining committee unless an exception has been granted by the Dean of Graduate Education.

[Reason for policies; ensures fair and correct examination procedures]

i. Exceptions: collegiate deans or their designated representatives may authorize assignments to master's and doctoral committees that do not fully conform to policies a, b, and d above.

[Reason for exception to policy: allow flexibility for unusual masters and doctoral topics in line with collegiate needs]

j. Collegiate units must review and approve ALL assignments as either advisor or chair of the Ph.D. final oral examination.

[Reason for policy: ensures appropriate standards for graduate education; assists initiative to promote clear standards and expectations for graduate advising]

PREPARED BY

Graduate School Policy Review Committee

http://www.grad.umn.edu/Transition/policy_review.html

Professor Krevans also provided copies of questions that the provisional Graduate Education Council had raised in its meeting the day before this one:

1. Preamble. 'the following minimum requirements apply': a council member pointed out that this phrase suggests that all the policy items are restrictive (gate closing) whereas some are inclusive (gate

opening), e.g. items a, e.

Should wording be changed? e.g. replace 'requirements' with 'standards'?

2. The phrase 'earned doctorate': There were further queries about fields such as art, where the MFA is the terminal degree qualifying recipients to hold full faculty positions at universities.

Do we need an exception added to each instance of this phrase, or can we take care of this in the definitions section?

3. There is a difference in the wording at the end of d ('subject to a review process and criteria specified by the collegiate unit') and f ('subject to approval by the collegiate unit').

Is there a significance to this variation in the wording? If not, should one be revised to agree with the other?

4. In item j, when it states that 'collegiate units must review and approve ALL assignments as either advisor or chair of the Ph.D. final oral examination', should it specify the deans or their representatives, as in item i? [Committee members who have replied by email disagree on what to do with this discrepancy and we will need to discuss it at our next meeting.]

* * *

Professor Krevans began by explaining that she had been asked last spring to chair a committee to assemble Graduate School policies that existed in various places (the constitution, the web, the catalogue); the committee was charged by Professor Wambach (chair of the Committee on Educational Policy at the time) as part of the restructuring of the Graduate school to reconfigure the policies with the goal of having them housed in the University's policy library. They hope to finish a first round of review by the end of fall semester and to have the full set of policies by the end of spring semester.

They proceeded slowly at first, but then the colleges asked for a fast track for some policies; the one she brings today is the first on the fast track, one that governs membership on graduate examining committees. Units want help to be sure their exams are "legal," and while staff have told departments that the old policies remain in place until new ones are adopted, there is a problem with no Graduate School constitution still in place. They hope to have this policy in place by January 1, and have had feedback thus far from Vice Provost Schroeder, college representatives, and the provisional Graduate Education Council.

-- Professor Tarone asked about the size of examining committees; Professor Krevans said they have not gotten that far; this policy deals only with who can be appointed to a committee. It is difficult to interpret "at least 2" for a committee of indeterminate size, Professor Tarone commented. In practice, Professor Krevans said, final oral committees range from four (the minimum) to seven (unusually large). People are less worried about the number than the appointments because the graduate-faculty system no longer exists.

-- Professor Krevans noted language in the preamble about special attention to requirements for advisors and committee chairs and reported that there is a national movement across graduate education to improve advising and set minimum standards.

-- Section b is proposed because everyone has horror stories about examinations that had to be redone or for which an exemption had to be sought, Professor Krevans explained. People must know what they are doing if they chair an examining committee. The advisor cannot chair, not because he or she is incompetent but because that is a different job and the advisor is invested in the student. The examining committee needs a disinterested senior faculty member to serve as chair.

-- Professor Ng asked if the language of the policy would continue to allow coordinate-campus faculty to serve. It would, Professor Krevans said—all tenured and tenure-track University of Minnesota faculty are eligible.

-- The policy performs two functions: gate-keeping, to be sure that those who serve are qualified to do so, and gate-opening, to be sure that all who are eligible can serve.

-- What about units that have a number of non-tenure-track faculty members, Professor Spannaus-Martin asked? Section (d) allows flexibility, Professor Krevans said. The intent of (a) is to make clear that anyone on a tenured or tenure-track appointment at the University is a graduate faculty member.

-- The term "earned doctorate" will take out many people, Ms. Phillips said, such as physicians. Professor Krevans said an M.D. is an earned doctorate, as is a J.D. and similar degrees. They have discussed the need for an exception for MFA faculty. There are transitions occurring in the performance and creative arts degrees—there are an increasing number of Ph.D. programs—but it has been difficult to find Ph.D.s in these fields in the past. They intend to allow for exceptions specific to fields where the Masters degree is considered the equivalent to the doctorate. Professor Wambach suggested the phrase "terminal degree" with amplification in an FAQ. Professor Krevans said they may use "earned doctorate or equivalent" and define the fields where the equivalencies exist.

-- Professor Krevans reported that some units in the Academic Health Center are not pleased with section (b) because they have many non-tenure-track faculty. She said the policy-review committee has not been persuaded it should change the rule. They understand there are different career paths in the AHC but they do not believe it unreasonable to require that a committee chair be a tenured faculty member. They will revisit the requirement if it turns out to impose a substantial hardship.

-- Ms. Phillips wondered if (b) should include an item (3), been trained to serve as chair. Professor Krevans said they hope that faculty members know what to do because they have gone through the process. They could make everyone hate them by requiring a web course to be an examining committee chair. One could have come to the University as a senior faculty member and not know the University's system, Professor McCormick observed. Professor Tarone said she did not see a parallel gate for advisors, who need to be better trained than committee chairs. The narrowest restrictions are for a committee chair; the next-narrowest are for an advisor, Professor Krevans responded. She added that this policy is only the scaffolding; a college could decide that no one can serve as a committee chair unless they read and sign a document about the process. This is a

barebones policy, with elements that every college should be able to live with, but they can adopt additional rules if they wish. They did not want to be too restrictive because there are such differences in faculty and colleges. Dr. Falkner noted that many policies have appendices and FAQs, and expectations and training could be linked to the policy.

-- Professor Brothen inquired about the term "appropriate" and wondered if "relevant" might be better. Professor Krevans said they borrowed the term from Michigan and Berkeley and did discuss it. They prefer appropriate. The idea is that the examiner must be right for the student, Professor Brothen said, which elicited from Professor Siliciano the comment that that is all the more reason to require that a tenured faculty serve in the position, in order to protect the student. In addition, Dr. Falkner said, if the student is to have the University's "stamp of approval," the process should be chaired by a tenured faculty member. The same logic applies in the case of section (c), Professor Krevans added.

-- Professor Root said she did not see how the policy matches the requirements. In her department there are only seven tenured and tenure-track faculty; there are a lot of other faculty who share the same goals but who are not tenured or tenure-track because of budget constraints. This requirement diminishes the role of a lot of people. Professor Krevans said her personal opinion is that many of those people should have tenure, and they do not mean to downgrade non-tenured faculty. The problem is that the outside world sees the tenured faculty as the only ones vested in the process. Professor Root said she believes the policy is regressive and that the University cannot continue to require as much as it does of tenured and tenure-track faculty. This is a career-long concern of hers that bubbles up everyone once in awhile and she feels obligated to convey the reality they see from her unit.

-- Professor McCormick said that if the case is controversial or difficult, there can be tensions between the chair and the advisor, and it is better that the chair be a tenured faculty member. Professor Krevans agreed and reported that the policy-review committee felt strongly about this point. If there is a lot of disagreement from the AHC, they could change their minds or this Committee may decide the requirement is impractical. Another issue, Professor Krevans added, is accreditation or accreditation-like things, such as the useless NRC reports that have just been issued. The requirement of a minimum number of tenured/tenure-track faculty is common at major research universities and outside agencies want to see who is certifying degrees—and want a permanent graduate governing body.

-- Are these requirements for the Ph.D. only or broadened to other degrees, Professor Wambach asked. There are very few restrictions on Masters degrees, Professor Krevans said; the gate-closing is around who can serve on Ph.D. final-oral committees. There is nothing here about Masters committees, Professor Wambach pointed out. They typically include the advisor and others; they understand there needs to be much more flexibility in Masters committees, including people on the committees who have no University appointment.

-- Professor Krevans said that section (d) is gate-opening: It allows other University faculty and staff who have the appropriate expertise to serve on a committee. The judgment about such service is made on an individual basis, not group.

-- One reason for section (e) is to preclude a dean or chair or the remaining faculty to say the person cannot continue to serve as advisor because, for example, they are mad at the person for

leaving with a lot of money. If the student agrees, the faculty member has the right to continue to serve as advisor. What about ensuring timeliness, Professor Siliciano asked? It can be difficult to schedule things when someone has left. Many programs appoint co-advisors to assist the student locally when the advisor is no longer at the University, Ms. Field reported. It may be that there will be need for a policy on what happens when an advisor leaves the University, Professor Wambach commented. Professor Krevans noted again that this policy only sets the rules on who is eligible. What if someone is denied tenure and leaves the University and has no academic appointment Professor Siliciano asked? As worded, the policy would allow the person to continue as advisor, Professor Krevans said. Dr. Schroeder said there could be a decision at the local level that the individual could not continue as advisor. In her view, Professor Krevans said, it would be very unusual for the DGS not to step in and advise the student that someone might not be a good advisor—and the advisor must consent to continuing, she pointed out.

-- Section (f) speaks to the category of people who have no faculty appointment and are not at the University; one example might be Joe Dowling at the Guthrie for a degree in Theater Arts. Such a person cannot be an advisor, and even as co-advisor the person's name would have to go on the transcript, something that cannot be done without at least giving the person a temporary University appointment.

-- Section (g) seems obvious, Professor Krevans commented, but she has seen things one would not believe.

-- Section (h) has also received some pushback so they created an exception; they realize there are faculty members with Ph.D.s who are getting a second degree. They did not intend to exclude faculty members who are already faculty members.

-- Section (i) requires that the exceptions allowed to sections (a), (b), and (d) must be granted at the level of the dean's office; they do not want the dean to say to the DGSs that they can do whatever they wish.

-- Section (j) requires college approval for all advisors and examining-committee chairs.

Professor Tarone repeated her point that she does not see where the advisor role is highlighted and said it should come right after the qualifications for chairs. The advisor should be required to hold a University appointment. Dr. Falkner repeated the point that this policy is only about who can serve on examining committees. There is a policy about advisors. This does not say an advisor must be on the committee, Professor Tarone said. The policy is only about who is eligible, Professor Krevans responded. Professor Brothen suggested that minutes from the policy-review committee might help explain the rationale for the language.

Professor Siliciano asked if the college has to approve every committee. It does, Professor Krevans, which is the case now. Students file a plan, with the committee membership, and that is how the committee is created. It is filed and approved at the college level. What about interdisciplinary programs, Ms. Phillips asked? Every one of them has a college home, Professor Krevans said. There could be raised eyebrows about the appropriate people to serve on committees in some interdisciplinary programs, Professor McCormick commented; what if the DGS does not approve? Then one goes to the associate dean for graduate education, Professor Krevans said; it is not like this

question has never come up before. Dr. Falkner suggested it might help to define where a decision is appropriately made. Most happen at the DGS level, Professor Krevans commented, but there is recourse. She said she would be comfortable saying the DGS makes the decision because there are backup systems. They recognize that there can be wild variation in the kind of people who are appropriate for interdisciplinary program committees.

Professor Brothen thanked Professor Krevans for her report and adjourned the meeting at 3:55.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota